

# Palau Youth Tobacco Survey 2001

## Executive Summary

---

### Palau's first national Youth Tobacco Survey shows that....

- **58%** of middle school students and **71%** of high school students are current\* users of *any* tobacco product (smoking cigarettes, chewing smokeless tobacco, or chewing any form of tobacco with betelnut).
- **54%** of middle school students and **68%** of high school students currently chew betelnut with tobacco.
- **72%** of middle school students and **87%** of high school students report that one or more of their closest friends chew betelnut with cigarettes or smokeless tobacco.
- Among middle school students, boys were significantly more likely than girls to report that they thought chewing betelnut with tobacco made young people look cool or fit in.
- **18%** of middle school students and **23%** of high school students currently smoke cigarettes.
- **6%** of middle school students and **25%** of high school students who had *never* smoked said they would “definitely” or “probably” smoke a cigarette if offered one by a close friend.
- Boys were significantly more likely than girls to have ever tried smoking pipe tobacco, smoking bidi or kretek cigarettes, or chewing smokeless tobacco in both middle and high schools.
- Palauan high school students are smoking at rates very close to those for American teens; **Palauan middle school students are *more* likely to be current smokers than their American counterparts.**
- The proportion of students using tobacco products increases significantly by grade through middle school and high school years: **49%** of students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade currently use any form of tobacco, compared to **84%** of students in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Palauan youth are using tobacco at overwhelmingly higher rates than American youth, due largely to the practice of chewing betelnut with tobacco.

- **48%** of middle school students who use tobacco with betelnut, started using tobacco (*mengeech*) by age10; and **54%** of high school students, who use tobacco with betelnut, started using tobacco (*mengeech*) by age12.
- **49%** of middle school students and **35%** of high school students, who attempted to get cigarettes or smokeless tobacco for either smoking or chewing betelnut, got the tobacco from a family member.
- **83%** of middle school students and **70%** of high school students who were current users got their *elaus* from friends or family members.
- **75%** of middle school students and **72%** of high school students live with someone who chews betelnut with tobacco.
- **47%** of middle school students and **42%** of high school students live with someone who smokes cigarettes, cigars or pipe tobacco.
- **90%** of middle school students and **94%** of high school students are aware that the smoke from other people's cigarettes, cigars or pipe is harmful to their health.
- **11%** of middle school students had used smokeless/chewing tobacco, and **37%** had used betelnut with or without tobacco, and **6%** had smoked cigarettes on school property in the past 30 days.
- **10%** of high school students had used smokeless/chewing tobacco, and **43%** had used betelnut with or without tobacco, and **7%** had smoked cigarettes on school property in the past 30 days.
- From **8%** to **43%** of middle school students reported having seen adult role models (police officers, sports coaches, health providers, educators, faith community leaders) chew betelnut with or without tobacco, at their place of work or in their professional roles in the past 30 days. The percentage was different for each of the professions.
- From **14%** to **65%** of high school students reported having seen adult role models (police officers, sports coaches, health providers, educators, faith community leaders) chew betelnut with or without tobacco, at their place of work or in their professional roles in the past 30 days. The percentage was different for each of the professions.
- **19%** of middle school students and **24%** of high school students who have never chewed betelnut are susceptible\* to chewing betelnut with tobacco.
- **2%** of middle school students and **5%** of high school students who have never smoked are susceptible\* to smoking cigarettes.

- **73%** of middle school students and **65%** of high school students who attempted to buy cigarettes or smokeless tobacco in the past 30 days were NOT refused because of their age.
- **69%** of middle school students and **73%** of high school students who attempted to buy elaus with tobacco in the past 30 days were NOT refused because of their age.
- **43%** of both middle school and high school students had been asked, in the past 30 days, to go to the store and buy cigarettes or tobacco by an adult.
- **94%** of both middle and high school students have occasionally or frequently seen actors on television or in movies using tobacco products.
- **56%** of middle school students and **69%** of high school students who smoke cigarettes report that Marlboro is their usual brand.
- **29%** of middle school students and **32%** of high school students say they would “definitely” or “probably” use or wear an item that had a tobacco company brand, picture or logo. Current smokers in both middle and high school are significantly more likely to be receptive to using promotional items from tobacco companies.
- **67%** of middle school students and **75%** of high school students who use tobacco in any form report that they would be interested in joining a program to help them quit.

---

\* ‘current tobacco use’ is defined as using tobacco on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey.

\* ‘susceptible’ is defined as those who answered definitely/probably yes when asked if they would

- 1) chew betelnut with tobacco in the next year OR take a betelnut chew with tobacco if offered by a close friend;
- 2) smoke a cigarette in the next year OR take a cigarette if offered by a close friend.